

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following is a complete listing of the claims in this application, reflects all changes currently being made to the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and all earlier listings of the claims:

Claim 1. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing information specific to a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network, information specific to said general-purpose computer through said external network, thereby executing unified management on said peripheral device and on said general-purpose computer, the information processing apparatus comprising:

discrimination means for discriminating whether the information received through said external network is specific to said peripheral device or is relating to said general-purpose computer;

specifying means for specifying, in case said discrimination means recognizes that the information received through said external network is specific to the peripheral device and indicates absence of inventory, information for specifying an expendable included in said information indicating the absence of inventory and information for specifying a user who is the owner of the expendable showing said absence of inventory; and

display control means for causing a predetermined display unit to display information

indicating the type of said expendable specified by said specifying means and information for identifying said user.

Claim 2. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising instruction means for instructing, to a distribution server communicable through an external network, delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying means to a destination based on said user information.

Claim 3. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said user information includes an e-mail address of a communication address, and the apparatus further comprises confirmation mail informing means for sending, to said e-mail address, a confirmation mail for instructing the delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying means and showing absence of inventory.

Claim 4. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising alarm means for informing an alarm to said distribution server or to a portable terminal assigned to a person in charge of distribution, in response, after the instruction for delivery by said instruction means, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of the type specified by said specifying means.

Claim 5. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said inventory absence information includes information indicating the remaining number of inventory of said specified expendable.

Claim 6. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said acquisition means includes first acquisition means for acquiring, through said external network, information on a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network and second acquisition means for acquiring, through said external network, information specific to the peripheral device connected through said local area network, wherein said first acquisition means acquires information relating to said general-purpose computer in a first format specific to said general-purpose computer and said second acquisition means acquires information specific to said peripheral device in a second format specific to said peripheral device.

Claim 7. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising conversion means for converting the information of said first format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said first acquisition means into said second format, wherein said predetermined display unit is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting said second format and is capable of display based on said second format.

Claim 8. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising conversion means for converting the information of said second format

relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said second acquisition means into said first format, wherein said predetermined display unit is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting said first format and is capable of display based on said first format.

Claim 9. (Withdrawn) An information processing apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising conversion means for converting the information of said first format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said first acquisition means and the information of said second format relating to said peripheral device and acquired by said second acquisition means into a common third format, wherein said predetermined display unit is capable of display based on said third format.

Claim 10. (Currently Amended) An inventory management system that manages an inventory of an expendable, comprising:

a first storage unit, adapted to store inventory information indicating an inventory number of an expendable used which is mounted in a printer and can be replaced by a new one, the inventory number being subtracted based on replacement of the expendable in the printer;

a receiver unit, adapted to receive absence information indicating that the inventory number of the expendable is zero or less than a predetermined number;

an instruction unit, adapted to provide, to an external apparatus via a communication line, a delivery instruction for delivery of [[the]] a new expendable to the printer;

a second storage unit, adapted to store history information indicating a

history of the delivery instruction provided by said instruction unit; and

an information alarm sending unit, adapted to inform send an alarm to the external apparatus via the communication line based on the history information stored in said second storage unit and a new reception of the absence information received by said receiver unit, after said instruction unit provides the delivery instruction for delivery of the new expendable.

Claim 11. (Withdrawn) A management control method for an information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing information specific to a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network, information specific to said general-purpose computer through said external network, thereby executing unified management on said peripheral device and on said general-purpose computer, the method comprising:

a discrimination step of discriminating whether the information received through said external network is specific to said peripheral device or is relating to said general-purpose computer;

a specifying step for specifying, in case said discrimination step recognizes that the information received through said external network is specific to the peripheral device and indicates absence of inventory, information for specifying an expendable included in said information indicating the absence of inventory and information for specifying a user who is the owner of the expendable showing said absence of inventory; and

a display control step of causing a predetermined display unit to display information indicating the type of said expendable specified by said specifying means and information for identifying said user.

Claim 12. (Withdrawn) A management control method according to claim 11, further comprising an instruction step of instructing, to a distribution server communicable through an external network, delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying means to a destination based on said user information.

Claim 13. (Withdrawn) A management control method according to claim 12, wherein said user information includes an e-mail address of a communication address, and the method further comprises a confirmation mail informing step of sending, to said e-mail address, a confirmation mail for instructing the delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying step and showing absence of inventory.

Claim 14. (Withdrawn) A management control method according to claim 12, further comprising an alarm step of informing an alarm to said distribution server or to a portable terminal assigned to a person in charge of distribution, in response, after the instruction for delivery by said instruction step, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of the type specified by said specifying step.

Claim 15. (Withdrawn) A management control method according to claim 11, wherein said inventory absence information includes information indicating the remaining number of inventory of said specified expendable.

Claim 16. (Withdrawn) A management control method according to claim 11, wherein said acquisition step includes a first acquisition means for acquiring, through said external network, information on a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network and a second acquisition step of acquiring, through said external network, information specific to the peripheral device connected through said local area network, wherein said first acquisition step acquires information relating to said general-purpose computer in a first format specific to said general-purpose computer and said second acquisition step acquires information specific to said peripheral device in a second format specific to said peripheral device.

Claim 17. (Withdrawn) A management control method according to claim 16, further comprising a conversion step for converting the information of said first format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said first acquisition step into said second format, wherein said predetermined display unit is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting said second format and is capable of display based on said second format.

Claim 18. (Withdrawn) A management control method according to claim 16, further comprising a conversion step of converting the information of said second format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said second acquisition step into said first format,

wherein said predetermined display unit is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting said first format and is capable of display based on said first format.

Claim 19. (Withdrawn) A management control method according to claim 16, further comprising a conversion step of converting the information of said first format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said first acquisition step and the information of said second format relating to said peripheral device and acquired by said second acquisition step into a common third format, wherein said predetermined display unit is capable of display based on said third format.

Claim 20. (Currently Amended) An inventory management control method that manages an inventory of an expendable, comprising the steps of:

storing inventory information indicating an inventory number of an expendable used which is mounted in a printer and can be replaced by a new one, the inventory number being subtracted based on replacement of the expendable in the printer;

receiving absence information indicating that the inventory number of the expendable is zero or less than a predetermined number;

providing, to an external apparatus via a communication line, a delivery instruction for delivery of the a new expendable to the printer; and

storing history information indicating a history of the delivery instruction provided in said providing step; and

informing sending an alarm to the external apparatus via the communication line based on the stored history information and a new reception of the absence information, after the delivery instruction for delivery of the new expendable is provided.

Claim 21. (Withdrawn) A computer program to be executed by an information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing information specific to a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network, information specific to said general-purpose computer through said external network, thereby executing unified management on said peripheral device and on said general-purpose computer, the program comprising:

a discrimination step of discriminating whether the information received through said external network is specific to said peripheral device or is relating to said general-purpose computer;

a specifying step for specifying, in case said discrimination step recognizes that the information received through said external network is specific to the peripheral device and indicates absence of inventory, information for specifying an expendable included in said information indicating the absence of inventory and information for specifying a user who is the owner of the expendable showing said absence of inventory; and

a display control step of causing a predetermined display unit to display information indicating the type of said expendable specified by said specifying means and information for identifying said user.

Claim 22. (Withdrawn) A computer program according to claim 21, further comprising an instruction step of instructing, to a distribution server communicable through an external network, delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying means to a destination based on said user information.

Claim 23. (Withdrawn) A computer program according to claim 22, wherein said user information includes an e-mail address of a communication address, and the method further comprises a confirmation mail informing step of sending, to said e-mail address, a confirmation mail for instructing the delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying step and showing absence of inventory.

Claim 24. (Withdrawn) A computer program according to claim 22, further comprising an alarm step of informing an alarm to said distribution server or to a portable terminal assigned to a person in charge of distribution, in response, after the instruction for delivery by said instruction step, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of the type specified by said specifying step.

Claim 25. (Withdrawn) A computer program according to claim 21, wherein said inventory absence information includes information indicating the remaining number of inventory of said specified expendable.

Claim 26. (Withdrawn) A computer program according to claim 21, wherein said acquisition step includes a first acquisition means for acquiring, through said external network, information on a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network and a second acquisition step of acquiring, through said external network, information specific to the peripheral device connected through said local area network, wherein said first acquisition step acquires information relating to said general-purpose computer in a first format specific to said general-purpose computer and said second acquisition step acquires information specific to said peripheral device in a second format specific to said peripheral device.

Claim 27. (Withdrawn) A computer program according to claim 26, further comprising a conversion step for converting the information of said first format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said first acquisition step into said second format, wherein said predetermined display unit is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting said second format and is capable of display based on said second format.

Claim 28. (Withdrawn) A computer program according to claim 26, further comprising a conversion step of converting the information of said second format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said second acquisition step into said first format,

wherein said predetermined display unit is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting said first format and is capable of display based on said first format.

Claim 29. (Withdrawn) A computer program according to claim 26, further comprising a conversion step of converting the information of said first format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said first acquisition step and the information of said second format relating to said peripheral device and acquired by said second acquisition step into a common third format, wherein said predetermined display unit is capable of display based on said third format.

Claim 30. (Currently Amended) A computer program to be executed by an inventory management system that manages an inventory of an expendable, comprising the steps of:

storing inventory information indicating an inventory number of an expendable used which is mounted in a printer and can be replaced by a new one, the inventory number being subtracted based on replacement of the expendable in the printer;

receiving absence information indicating that the inventory number of the expendable is zero or less than a predetermined number;

providing, to an external apparatus via a communication line, a delivery instruction for delivery of the a new expendable to the printer; and

storing history information indicating a history of the delivery instruction provided in said providing step; and

informing sending an alarm to the external apparatus via the communication line based

on the stored history information and a new reception of the absence information, after the delivery instruction for delivery of the new expandable is provided.

Claim 31. (Withdrawn) A memory medium storing a computer readable program to be executed by an information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing information specific to a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network, information specific to said general-purpose computer through said external network, thereby executing unified management on said peripheral device and on said general-purpose computer, the program comprising:

a discrimination step of discriminating whether the information received through said external network is specific to said peripheral device or is relating to said general-purpose computer;

a specifying step for specifying, in case said discrimination step recognizes that the information received through said external network is specific to the peripheral device and indicates absence of inventory, information for specifying an expendable included in said information indicating the absence of inventory and information for specifying a user who is the owner of the expendable showing said absence of inventory; and

a display control step of causing a predetermined display unit to display information indicating the type of said expendable specified by said specifying means and information for

identifying said user.

Claim 32. (Canceled)

Claim 33. (Previously Presented) A system according to Claim 10, wherein the inventory information stored by said first storage unit can be monitored by an external apparatus.

Claim 34. (Previously Presented) A system according to Claim 33, wherein the inventory information can be monitored by a browser provided in the external apparatus, and said first storage unit is able to output display information enabling the browser to monitor the inventory information.

Claim 35. (Previously Presented) A system according to Claim 33, wherein said first storage unit stores the inventory information for each one of a plurality of expendable types, and the inventory information can be monitored for each expendable type by the external apparatus.

Claim 36. (Previously Presented) A system according to Claim 35, wherein said second storage unit stores the history information for each one of the plurality of expendable types so as to show that the delivery instruction has been provided for each expendable type, and wherein the inventory information can be monitored for each expendable type by the external apparatus.

Claim 37. (Previously Presented) A system according to Claim 36, further comprising an order reception unit adapted to receive an order for an expendable of any one of the plurality of expendable types from the external apparatus, wherein the external apparatus is provided with an order placement display screen having a plurality of order placement sections for respective ones of the plurality of expendable types and wherein each order placement section is activated or inactivated in accordance with the inventory number of expendable for a expendable type corresponding to the order placement section.

Claim 38. (Previously Presented) A system according to Claim 10, wherein the expendable is toner or ink.

Claim 39. (Previously Presented) A system according to Claim 10, wherein the absence information indicates that a remaining amount of an expendable is at a low level.

Claim 40. (Previously Presented) An inventory management control method according to Claim 20, wherein the stored inventory information can be monitored by an external apparatus.

Claim 41. (Previously Presented) An inventory management control method according to Claim 40, wherein the inventory information can be monitored by a browser provided in the external apparatus, and further comprising the step of outputting display information enabling the browser to monitor the inventory information.

Claim 42. (Previously Presented) An inventory management control method according to Claim 40, wherein the inventory information for each one of a plurality of expendable types is stored, and the inventory information can be monitored for each expendable type by the external apparatus.

Claim 43. (Previously Presented) An inventory management control method according to Claim 42, wherein the history information for each one of the plurality of expendable types is stored so as to show that the delivery instruction has been provided for each expendable type, and wherein the inventory information can be monitored for each expendable type by the external apparatus.

Claim 44. (Previously Presented) An inventory management control method according to Claim 43, further comprising the step of receiving an order for an expendable of any one of the plurality of expendable types from the external apparatus, wherein the external apparatus is provided with an order placement display screen having a plurality of order placement sections for respective ones of the plurality of expendable types and wherein each order placement section is activated or inactivated in accordance with the inventory number of expendable for a expendable type corresponding to the order placement section.

Claim 45. (Previously Presented) An inventory management control method according to Claim 20, wherein the expendable is toner or ink.

Claim 46. (Previously Presented) An inventory management control method according to Claim 20, wherein the absence information indicates that a remaining amount of an expendable is at a low level.

Claim 47. (Previously Presented) A computer program according to Claim 30, wherein the stored inventory information can be monitored by an external apparatus.

Claim 48. (Previously Presented) A computer program according to Claim 47, wherein the inventory information can be monitored by a browser provided in the external apparatus, and further comprising the step of outputting display information enabling the browser to monitor the inventory information.

Claim 49. (Previously Presented) A computer program according to Claim 47, wherein the inventory information for each one of a plurality of expendable types is stored, and the inventory information can be monitored for each expendable type by the external apparatus.

Claim 50. (Previously Presented) A computer program according to Claim 49, wherein the history information for each one of the plurality of expendable types is stored so as to show that the delivery instruction has been provided for each expendable type, and wherein the inventory information can be monitored for each expendable type by the external apparatus.

Claim 51. (Previously Presented) A computer program according to Claim 50, further

comprising the step of receiving an order for an expendable of any one of the plurality of expendable types from the external apparatus, wherein the external apparatus is provided with an order placement display screen having a plurality of order placement sections for respective ones of the plurality of expendable types and wherein each order placement section is activated or inactivated in accordance with the inventory number of expendable for a expendable type corresponding to the order placement section.

Claim 52. (Previously Presented) A computer program according to Claim 30, wherein the expendable is toner or ink.

Claim 53. (Previously Presented) A computer program according to Claim 30, wherein the absence information indicates that a remaining amount of an expendable is at a low level.